Michael L. Crowley, ESQ (SBN 117008) 1 Andre L. Verdun, ESQ. (SBN 265436) **CROWLEY LAW GROUP** 2 401 West A Street, Ste 925 San Diego, CA 92101 Tel. (619) 238-5700 Fax. (866) 786-6993 3 4 andreverdun@crowleylawgroup.com 5 Attorneys for Plaintiffs 6 Terry Polk and Timothy Wagoner 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 10 TERRY POLK, an individual and TIMOTHY 11 WAGONER, an individual, 12 Plaintiff, 13 VS. 14 15 **LEGAL RECOVERY LAW OFFICES**, a 16 an individual. 17 Defendant. 18

Case No.: _'12CV0641 W MDD

COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

corporation, PALISADES COLLECTION, a limited liability company, and MARK WALSH,

INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiffs Terry Polk (Polk) and Timothy Wagoner (Wagoner) (collectively, "Plaintiffs") bring this suit against defendants Palisades Collections (Palisades), Legal Recovery Law Offices (LRLO) and Mark Walsh (Walsh) (collectively, "defendants") for violations of state and federal law debt collection laws committed by defendants. Specifically, Palisades had filed a fraudulent proof of service claiming that the plaintiffs were served with a summons and complaint when they were not. Defendants then proceeded to garnish the wages of Polk. After evidence was provided that the service of process was fraudulent and made aware of the unique harm being caused to plaintiffs, defendants refused to stop the garnishment.

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PARTIES

- 2. Plaintiffs are, and at all times herein mentioned were, individuals residing in Ventura County, California. Plaintiffs are consumers.
- 3. Defendant, Palisades is, and at all times herein mentioned was, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of California. Palisades is engaged the collection of debt as its ordinary business and is therefore debt collector under state and federal law.
- 4. Defendant, LRLO is, and at all times herein mentioned was, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of California. LRLO is a debt collector because in its "ordinary course of business" they are engaged in debt collection on behalf of others.
- 5. Defendant, Walsh is, and at all times herein mentioned was, an individual. Walsh is a debt collector because he is a "person who, in the ordinary course of business, regularly on behalf of himself or herself or others, engages in debt collection."
- 6. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or otherwise, of Defendants DOES 1-50 inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiffs who, therefore, sues said Defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiffs will amend this complaint to show their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and thereon allege, that each of said Defendants is responsible in some manner for the events and happenings, and proximately caused the injuries and damages, hereinafter alleged.

JURISDICTION

- 7. Jurisdiction of this court arises pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 1692(k), and 28 U.S.C. § 1367 for supplemental state claims.
- 8. This action arises out of the defendants' violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 et seq. ("FDCPA") and the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, California Civil Code §§ 1788-1788.32 ("Rosenthal Act").
 - 9. Because the defendants do business within the State of California, personal

jurisdiction is established.

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<u>VENUE</u>

- 10. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391.
- 11. At all times relevant, the defendants conducted business within the State of California.
- 12. Defendants LRLO and Walsh are domiciled in San Diego, California, within the Southern District of California.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 13. On or about January 9, 2008 Palisades filed a debt collection lawsuit against Polk and Wagoner, collective Plaintiffs, in the Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, case number 56-2011-00390515-CL-CL-VTA. That lawsuit was for the collection of a consumer debt.
- 14. Palisades filed a "proof of service" indicating that Plaintiffs were served with the summons and complaint on January 21, 2008.
 - 15. The proof of service claims plaintiffs were each served at this home at 3:12 PM.
- 16. Palisades neither personally nor properly served plaintiffs on January 21, 2008 or any other date. Plaintiffs had no knowledge of the lawsuit before default was taken.
- 17. Regardless, Palisades filed a proof of service stating that plaintiffs were served with a complaint on January 21, 2008.
- 18. On December 1, 2008 Palisades took default and had a judgment entered against plaintiffs. This default was entered on the basis that on January 21, 2008 plaintiffs were personally served with a summons and complaint. Palisades waited approximately 3 years before they took any action on their default judgment.
- 19. Polk first learned of this lawsuit on January 25, 2012 when his employer's payroll department notified Polk that starting on Friday, January 27, 2012 this paycheck would be deducted to repay the judgment obtained by Palisades.
- 20. Polk notified Wagoner of the judgment and asked him if he had ever been served with the complaint. Confirming to Polk that Wagoner had not been served with the

complaint, Polk and Wagoner hired counsel to defend against the entry of default and judgment obtained by Palisades.

- 21. Based on the illegal judgment, Palisades garnished the paycheck of Polk and took 25% from each of his paychecks. Plaintiff Wagoner feared levies and garnishment because of the illegal judgment obtained against him.
 - 22. This substantial reduction in pay severely harmed Polk and his household.
- 23. Polk and Wagoner are both chronically ill. In light of their medical condition Plaintiffs are "disabled" as that term is defined by Civil Code § 1761.
- 24. The illegal garnishment interfered with plaintiff's ability to purchase vital medications required to be healthy.
- 25. To make up for the lost income, Polk was required to barrow from his retirement account which will result in harm to Polk.
- 26. Plaintiffs incurred \$4,039.70 in costs and fees in fighting the contested motion to set aside default. These fees were reasonably incurred by investigating the facts of the service, researching the applicable law, litigating the contested motion to set aside the default obtained. These fees are actual damages caused by Palisades' wrongdoing and are therefore recoverable by plaintiffs as against defendants.
- 27.On or about March 5, 2012 the Superior Court of California heard the plaintiffs' motion to set aside the default judgment entered against plaintiffs. At the time this lawsuit was filed, the result of the hearing has not been decided. The court has determined it was unclear whether under California law it has the power to set aside the default despite plaintiff's lack of knowledge until January 2012 and has taken the matter under a lengthy submission.
- 28. On or about March 5, 2012, counsel for plaintiffs informed counsel for defendant, LRLO, which is also a debt collector, about the court taking the matter under submission. Counsel for plaintiff also informed defendants about the personal health concerns of the plaintiffs, the adverse affects the garnishment is having on the plaintiffs and on their health, his intent to file this lawsuit and requested that the parties "enter

into a stipulated agreement with [defendants] to suspend garnishment pending the outcome of the lawsuit". Defendants requested a copy of the draft lawsuit.

29. On or about March 14, 2012, plaintiffs' counsel sent LRLO a copy of a paystub that proved that Polk was working on the day he was alleged to have been served with the summons and complaint. Defendants' claim Plaintiff was at home. Plaintiffs' counsel again requested a stipulation regarding the garnishment to mitigate harm. Defendant's stated they were "unwilling" to do so.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(California Civil Code section 1788 et seq.)

- 30. Plaintiffs reaffirm and reallege paragraphs above herein as if specifically set forth more fully herein below.
- 31. Defendants are included in the class of entities whose debt collection activities are regulated under California Civil Code section 1788 *et seq.* as defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(c).
 - 32. Plaintiffs are "person[s]" as defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(g).
- 33. This case involves money, property or their equivalent, due or owing or alleged to be due or owing from a natural person by reason of a consumer transaction. As such, this action arises out of a "consumer debt" as those terms are defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(f).
- 34. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of California Civil Code section 1788 *et seq.*, including but not limited to:
 - a. Cal. Civ. Code section 1788.15 which states a "debt collector shall [not] collect or attempt to collect a consumer debt by means of judicial proceedings when the debt collector knows that service of process, where essential to jurisdiction over the debtor or his property, has not been legally effected;
 - b. Cal. Civ. Code section 1788.10(c) which prohibits the communication "to any person the fact that a debtor has engaged in conduct, other than the

failure to pay a consumer debt, which the debt collector knows or has reason to believe will defame the debtor;

- c. Cal. Civ. Code section 1788.12(a) which prohibits "[c]ommunicating with the debtor's employer regarding the debtor's consumer debt unless such a communication is necessary to the collection of the debt".
- 35. It is believed that other violations of 1788 *et seq.* have been violated and if discovered during the process of discovery Plaintiffs will amend this complaint to allege the specific allegations setting forth the violations.
- 36. As a result of violation of California Civil Code § 1788 *et seq.* plaintiffs are entitled to statutory damages in the amount of \$1,000, actual damages in an amount to be determined at trial from defendants, and attorney fees and cost.
- 37. Plaintiffs did suffer actual damages; *inter ailia*, legal fees incurred trying to protect their interest, adverse effects to their health, distress, aggravation and anxiety suffered by the plaintiffs, interest and penalties incurred from barrowing from their saving's, all as a result of defendant's conduct.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(Title 15 USC 1692 et seq.)

- 38. Plaintiffs reaffirms and realleges paragraphs above herein as if specifically set forth more fully herein below.
 - 39. Defendants are "debt collectors" as defined by 15 USC 1692a(6).
- 40. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined by 15 USC section 1692c(d) and 15 USC 1692a(3).
- 41. These financial obligations were primarily for personal, family or household purposes and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(5).
- 42. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Engaging in conduct the natural consequence of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse Plaintiff (§1692d));

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- b. Using false, deceptive, or misleading representations or means in connection with collection of a debt (§1692e);
- c. Using false representations and deceptive practices in connection with collection of an alleged debt from Plaintiff (§1692e(10);
- d. Using unfair or unconscionable means against Plaintiff in connection with an attempt to collect a debt (§1692f)); and
- e. Disclosing to a third party the existence of the debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff (§ 1692b(2) & § 1692c(b)).

43. It is believed that other violations of 15 U.S.C. 1692 *et seq.* have been violated and if discovered during the process of discovery Plaintiffs will amend this complaint to allege the specific allegations setting forth the violations.

44. As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, the plaintiffs are entitled to any actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1) including *inter ailia*, legal fees incurred trying to protect their interest, adverse effects to their health, distress, aggravation and anxiety suffered by the plaintiffs, interest and penalties incurred from barrowing from their saving's, all as a result of defendant's conduct; statutory damages in an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from each and every defendant, jointly and severally.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

(California Civil Code 1788.17)

- 45. Plaintiff reaffirms and realleges paragraphs above herein as if specifically set forth more fully herein below.
- 46. California Civil Code section 1788.17 provides any entity included in the class of entities whose debt collection activities are regulated under California Civil Code section 1788 et seq. as defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(c), have violated California Civil Code section 1788.17 when particular sections of Title 15 USC 1692 are violated.

- 47. This cause of action alleges damages under California Civil Code section 1788.17 for violation of Title 15 USC 1692.
- 48. Defendants are included in the class of entities whose debt collection activities are regulated under California Civil Code section 1788 *et seq.* as defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(c)
 - 49. Plaintiffs are "person[s]" as defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(g).
- 50. This case involves money, property or their equivalent, due or owing or alleged to be due or owing from a natural person by reason of a consumer transaction. As such, this action arises out of a "consumer debt" as those terms are defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(f).
- 51. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA including but not limited to:
 - a. Engaging in conduct the natural consequence of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse Plaintiff (§1692d));
 - Using false, deceptive, or misleading representations or means in connection with collection of a debt (§1692e);
 - c. Using false representations and deceptive practices in connection with collection of an alleged debt from Plaintiff (§1692e(10);
 - d. Using unfair or unconscionable means against Plaintiff in connection with an attempt to collect a debt (§1692f)); and
 - e. Disclosing to a third party the existence of the debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff (§ 1692b(2) & § 1692c(b)).
- 52. It is believed that other violations of Title 15 U.S.C. 1692 *et seq.* have been violated and if discovered during the process of discovery Plaintiffs will amend this complaint to allege the specific allegations setting forth the violations.
- 53. Upon proving the allegation stated above, under the Cal. Civ. Code 1788.17 pursuant to 15 USC § 1692, Plaintiffs are entitled to statutory damages, actual damages and attorney fees.

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27 28 54. As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, the plaintiffs are entitled to any actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1) including, *inter ailia*, legal fees incurred trying to protect their interest, adverse effects to their health, distress, aggravation and anxiety suffered by the plaintiffs, interest and penalties incurred from barrowing from their saving's, all as a result of defendant's conduct; statutory damages in an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from each and every defendant, jointly and severally.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Negligence)

- 55. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the above paragraphs as though fully stated herein below.
- 56. Defendants' outrageous and intrusive acts as described herein constituted negligence.
- 57. Defendants negligently inflicted emotional distress, aggravation, anxiety and financial harm to Plaintiffs.
 - 58. Defendants breached a duty imposed and failed to exercise ordinary care.
- 59. Defendants owed Plaintiffs a duty to refrain from unlawful debt collections (California Civil Code §1788 et seq. and Title 15 USC 1692 et seq.).
 - 60. The breach of such duty proximately caused injury to Plaintiff.
- 61. The injury resulted from an occurrence the nature of which these statutes were designed to protect Plaintiff from.
- 62. Plaintiff is a member of the class of persons the statutes were designed to protect.
- 63. Defendants' conduct, as described herein, was wrongful conduct in that the defendants conducted their business in an abusive, oppressive, and harassing manner.
- 64. Defendants negligently trained, supervised, and retained, its employees and agents.

- 65. Defendants' wrongful conduct as described herein actually and proximately caused the Plaintiffs severe and serious emotional distress, anxiety and aggravation in that the defendants wrongful conduct has caused harm as described above.
- 66. It is clearly foreseeable that defendants' actions as described herein could cause harm, including severe and serious emotional distress
- 67. As a direct and proximate result of defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiffs has suffered damages in an amount to be determined at trial. Defendants' wrongful conduct as described herein actually and proximately caused the Plaintiffs' harm as noted above.
- 68. Defendants acted with oppression, and/or malice, thereby entitling Plaintiff's to punitive damages in an amount to be determined at trial. Defendant acted in a despicable manner and acted with a conscious disregard to the rights of Plaintiffs.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Polk and Plaintiff Wagoner pray for judgment against defendants as follows:

- a. An award of actual damages pursuant to California Civil Code § 1788.30(a);
- b. An award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b);
- c. An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code§ 1788.30(c).
- d. Statutory damages pursuant to Cal. Civil Code § 1788.30(b) and Civil Code 1788.17;
- e. Actual damages according to proof pursuant to Cal. Civil Code § 1788 and 1788.17, as well as common law;
- f. An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney fees pursuant to Cal. Civil Code § 1788 and 1788.17,
- g. An award of actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1);

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1	h. An award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C.						
2	1692k(a)(2)(A);						
3	i. An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant t						
4	15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3);						
5	j. General damages according to proof;						
6	k. Special damages according to proof;						
7	I. Treble damages pursuant to Civil Code §3345;						
8	m. Punitive damages;						
9	n. Attorneys' fees and costs; and						
10	o. Such other and further relief that may be just and proper.						
11	69. Plaintiffs hereby demand a trial by jury.						
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13	Dated this: March 14, 2012						
14	CROWLEY LAW GROUP						
15	/a/Miakaall Oosyday						
16	/s/ Michael L. Crowley Michael L. Crowley						
17	Attorney for the Plaintiffs Terry Polk Timothy Wagoner						
18	Timothy Wagoner						
19	CROWLEY LAW GROUP						
20	/a/ Andra I. Vardun						
21	/s/ Andre L. Verdun Andre L. Verdun Attornov for the Plaintiffs						
22	Attorney for the Plaintiffs Terry Polk Timothy Wagoner						
23	Timothy Wagoner						
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DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL 1 2 NOW COMES Plaintiffs, Polk and Wagoner, by and through their attorneys, 3 Michael L. Crowley and Andre L. Verdun and hereby demands a trial by jury in the 4 above-captioned matter. 5 Dated this: March 14, 2012 6 7 **CROWLEY LAW GROUP** 8 /s/ Michael L. Crowley_ 9 Michael L. Crowley Attorney for the Plaintiffs Terry Polk 10 Timóthy Wagoner 11 12 **CROWLEY LAW GROUP** 13 /s/ Andre L. Verdun_ 14 Andre L. Verdun Attorney for the Plaintiffs Terry Polk 15 Timóthy Wagoner 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

SJS 44 (Rev. 12/07)

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS		DEFENDANTS						
ERRY POLK and TIM	OTHY WAGONER	LEGAL RECOVERY LAW OFFICES, and MARK WALSH, PALISADES COLLECTION						
(b) County of Residence	e of First Listed Plaintiff \(\frac{\sqrt{1}}{2}\)	/ENTURA		County of Residence of First Listed Defendant SAN DIEGO				
(E	EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CA	ASES)	(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)					
					D CONDEMNATION CASES, INVOLVED.	USE THE LOCATION C	OF THE	
(c) Attorney's (Firm Name	e, Address, and Telephone Numb	er)		Attorneys (If Known)				
Crowley Law Group 40	1 West A Street, San	Diego, CA 9210	1		•,	12CV0641 W	MDD	
II. BASIS OF JURISI	OICTION (Place an "X" i	n One Box Only)	III. CI	 TIZENSHIP OF P	PRINCIPAL PARTIE	S(Place an "X" in One P	Box for Plaintiff	
☐ 1 U.S. Government	■ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)			(For Diversity Cases Only)	TE DEF	and One Box for De	,	
Plaintiff				Citizen of This State - PTF (A安年) Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State - PTF (本安年) Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State (aef)				
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)			Citizen of Another State				
				en or Subject of a reign Country	1 3 □ 3 Foreign Nation	О	6 🗖 6	
IV. NATURE OF SUI			-					
CONTRACT	TOI			ORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STA		
☐ 110 Insurance ☐ 120 Marine ☐ 130 Miller Act ☐ 140 Negotiable Instrument	PERSONAL INJURY □ 310 Airplane □ 315 Airplane Product Liability	PERSONAL INJUR □ 362 Personal Injury Med. Malpractic □ 365 Personal Injury	-	0 Agriculture 20 Other Food & Drug 25 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881	☐ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 ☐ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157	☐ 400 State Reappo ☐ 410 Antitrust ☐ 430 Banks and B ☐ 450 Commerce		
☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment	☐ 320 Assault, Libel &	Product Liability	y □ 63	0 Liquor Laws	PROPERTY RIGHTS	☐ 460 Deportation	a	
& Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act	t Slander ☐ 330 Federal Employers'	☐ 368 Asbestos Persona Injury Product		0 R.R. & Truck 0 Airline Regs.	☐ 820 Copyrights ☐ 830 Patent	☐ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations		
☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans	Liability ☐ 340 Marine		60 Occupational Safety/Health	□ 840 Trademark	☐ 480 Consumer Credit ☐ 490 Cable/Sat TV			
(Excl. Veterans)	☐ 345 Marine Product	PERSONAL PROPER 370 Other Fraud		00 Other		☐ 810 Selective Ser	rvice	
☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits	Liability ☐ 350 Motor Vehicle	☐ 371 Truth in Lending☐ 380 Other Personal		0 Fair Labor Standards	SOCIAL SECURITY ☐ 861 HIA (1395ff)	■ 850 Securities/Co Exchange	ommodities/	
☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits	☐ 355 Motor Vehicle	355 Motor Vehicle Property Damage		Act	☐ 862 Black Lung (923)	☐ 875 Customer Ch	☐ 875 Customer Challenge	
☐ 190 Other Contract☐ 195 Contract Product Liability	Product Liability 360 Other Personal	☐ 385 Property Damage Product Liability		0 Labor/Mgmt. Relations 0 Labor/Mgmt.Reporting	☐ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g))☐ 864 SSID Title XVI	12 USC 3410 890 Other Statuto		
☐ 196 Franchise	Injury			& Disclosure Act	□ 865 RSI (405(g))	☐ 891 Agricultural	Acts	
REAL PROPERTY ☐ 210 Land Condemnation	CIVIL RIGHTS ☐ 441 Voting	PRISONER PETITIO ☐ 510 Motions to Vaca		0 Railway Labor Act 0 Other Labor Litigation	FEDERAL TAX SUITS ☐ 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff	□ 892 Economic St □ 893 Environmen		
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☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment☐ 240 Torts to Land☐	☐ 443 Housing/ Accommodations	Habeas Corpus: ☐ 530 General		Security Act	☐ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	Act	information	
☐ 245 Tort Product Liability ☐ 290 All Other Real Property	☐ 444 Welfare ☐ 445 Amer. w/Disabilities -	□ 535 Death Penalty□ 540 Mandamus & Ot	her 17 46	IMMIGRATION 2 Naturalization Application		☐ 900Appeal of Fed Under Equal		
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